

**Southern Plains Inventory and Monitoring Network
Technical Committee Meeting
November 21, 2005
Via Teleconference
Chair: Alden Miller**

Attending – A. Miller – Chair (WABA), P. Eubank – Member (LAMR), A. Roberts – Member (SAND), D. Jacobs – Member (PECO), J. Lott – Member (LYJO), F. Revello – Member (FOLS), F. Pannebaker – Member (BEOL), B. Carey (LYJO), K. Zimmermann (BEOL), T. DeFex (Texas A+M), H. Sosinski (SOPN Data Manager), D. Perkins (SOPN Network Coordinator).

Meeting Commenced at 2:00.

I. Update since annual meeting

- A. SOPN has received SAND bird report and made comments on the first draft. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory is incorporating the comments and should have it back to SOPN by 11/23/05. Then SAND will have a chance to review before it is finalized. A. Roberts commented that RMBO has been excellent to work with.
- B. Vegetation mapping – There are four phases to completing a vegetation map: plot data collection, developing a classification key from the plot data, developing a GIS map from the plot data and classification, and an accuracy assessment of the map.
 - 1. Field work for plot data is complete at LYJO, WABA, BEOL, SAND, FOUN, CAVO, FOLS
 - 2. Classification and mapping has been paid for and is in progress at LYJO, WABA, (this winter) SAND, FOUN, CAVO, FOLS (spring and summer). Additional plot data collection has been paid for at PECO and will occur in FY06, with characterization and mapping (also already paid for) to follow in winter of 2006-07.
 - 3. FY06 New Funds – We discussed funding with the vegetation mapping program on 11/07 and have determined that several activities are likely to be funded in FY2006. First, we plan to hold a scoping meeting at CHIC this winter and begin plot work in 2006, with characterization taking place in the winter of 2006-07. If the mapping and characterization can be completed by early summer, we plan to do accuracy assessments at WABA, LYJO, SAND, and BEOL.
 - 4. Mapping at LAMR and ALFL should be complete this winter. SOPN has had minimal contact with this project. P. Eubank said that the accuracy assessments were nearly complete.

C. Inventories

- 1. BOR and Colorado Natural Heritage program have shown interest in conducting the SAND rare animal inventory. We plan to

request information on their qualifications and study plan and decide between them.

2. R. Roath completed field work for SAND plants. D. Perkins said this was a two year project with the possibility of a second field season if the principal investigator (R. Roath – Colorado State) thought certain species were missed. At last contact, R. Roath did not think an additional field season would be necessary. A. Roberts suggested doing a comparison between the vegetation mapping data collected by Colorado Natural Heritage Program and R. Roath's data to see if there were any missing species.
3. Submitted PECO new lands inventory to NRPP Small Park. This is a high priority inventory according to our Inventory Needs list. Will hear in December if funded.
4. Plan to submit multi-park bat proposal to Desert Southwest CESU, will use SOPN to match funds, plan to get several parks done with a bat team.

D. NPSpecies certification

1. Animals largely completed by Sep. 30.
2. Plants completed except for FOLS, CAVO, and FOUN. Natural Heritage New Mexico has been in the field and plans to review CAVO and FOUN shortly. H. Sosinski will be contacting K. Kindscher with Kansas Natural Heritage Inventory to do plants at FOLS. This is a more complex data set, but he is familiar with the park and with Kansas flora. F. Revello agreed that K. Kindscher would be a good person to do this work.

E. IMR I+M Communication Workshop – K. McMurry and D. Ditmanson will be Supt. representatives And S. Burrough and T. Benson will be resource management representatives. **Reminder – Please try to complete surveys to increase the usefulness of the workshop, due by 12/3. Post meeting note – D. Ditmanson has a conflict and we will be looking for another Superintendent to take his place.**

F. Phase I submitted and accepted. Minor editorial comments that will be incorporated into the Phase II report.

G. Prairie restoration proposal submitted to NRPP-Disturbed Lands – BEOL, SAND, LYJO, CHIC, and WABA. Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center as major partner. The parks selected for this proposal were a subset from last year's nine park proposal. The subset was chosen based on the matching that the park could provide and the parks that the major partner could work with. If funded, it is SOPN's hope to find additional funding to bring the other original parks back into the proposal.

II. Vital Signs Selection Process – The technical committee reviewed the planned selection process and made a few changes outlined below.

A. Vital Signs Prioritization Workshop

1. January 23-24, Amarillo, Texas

2. Four Breakout Groups **ACTION ITEM – The technical committee approved the following four breakout groups.**
 - a. Animals
 - b. Plants
 - c. Water Quality and Resources
 - d. Landscape, Air Quality and Other
3. Pre-Set Criteria **ACTION ITEM – The technical committee approved the following criteria to be used at the prioritization workshop.**
 - a. Significance to park management (40%)
-ranked by TC prior to workshop
 - b. Ecological significance (35%) – ranked primarily by experts at workshop
 - c. Feasibility (15%) - ranked primarily by experts at workshop
 - d. Vital Signs Goals (10%) - ranked by SOPN coordinator and reviewed by I+M IMR Regional coordinator prior to workshop. D. Perkins said he was 50:50 as to whether this should be included. B. Carey said that it would add a criteria that would include some oversight and control to make sure it fits with the I+M program goals. D. Perkins stated that it would be a relatively small proportion of the overall score, but would only get feedback from two people. This would be countered at the selection meeting where the TC and individual parks could lobby for a certain vital sign to be moved up the list.
 - e. There was discussion over whether to have criteria with rigid and defined scoring systems (i.e. If you agree with 5 statements then score it a 4, if you agree with 3-4 statements score it a 3) versus a more subjective scoring system that asks scorers to consider several criteria and then give a score. J. Lott thought that you would decrease scoring bias and make it easier to be objective with a rigid and defined scoring system. F. Panebacker agreed. **ACTION ITEM – All criteria will be re-defined with the well defined scoring system.**
4. Last half day – Discuss top ranked items (top 1/4 to 1/3) for potential collaboration for protocol development and partnership opportunities
5. D. Perkins listed potential people to invite to the prioritization workshop. This was a list included people that have attended one of our workshops or we have had some contact with in the past, both or none previous workshops. **Action Item: The following people were suggested to be invited: Roel Lopez (Texas A+M), Pam Benjamin (NPS), Kevin Noon (NPS), S. Braumiller (NPS), Brian Hajney (USFS), James Stubbendieck (University of**

Nebraska), Lorrie Bornagan (NRCS). Additional suggestions or deletions are welcome.

6. Proposed facilitators – Dan Tinker, an I+M coordinator (Greg Shriver), and two more to be determined
7. The result of this workshop is a prioritized list of vital signs.

B. Vital Signs Selection Workshop

1. Meeting of Technical Committee only
2. Take Prioritized list and tweak, actual selection of vital signs
3. Discussion about pros and cons of holding this meeting with prioritization meeting or with the presentation to Board.
Advantages of the early meeting include that the process would be completed in one week, everything would be fresh in our minds, and would have plenty of time to make defensible justifications on why certain vital signs were moved up or down. Advantages of joining with Board presentation would include time to assess prioritized list with other park personnel before selection. F. Revello stated that he preferred to combine it with the prioritization meeting and get everything done in one week. J. Lott concurred. **ACTION ITEM – The technical committee decided that the selection meeting will follow the prioritization meeting (January 24-25) and take place in Amarillo on Thursday January 26. D. Perkins requested that we get 3-4 technical committee members to attend the Vital Signs Approval meeting (see below) to help support decisions that were made during the selection process.**

C. Vital Signs Approval Meeting

1. Presentation to Board of Directors
2. Planned for March or April